

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

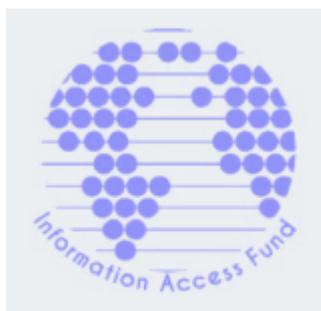
VILNIUS INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

VILNIUS 2021

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Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VIPA) – a think tank established in 2017. Its experts continuously analyze and comment the most relevant events in Lithuania, prepare recommendations for public policy, organize discussions, conferences, and trainings.

VIPA analyses the problems inside Lithuania as well as issues in foreign policy and encourage citizens to actively take part in the process of solving policy issues. VIPA promotes an open, civic, and active society, advocates the principles of law, equality, and liberal democracy.

way of life, and increasingly ideologically hardened (perhaps less by battle and more by the surrounding political realities) is cause for serious socio-political concern, in terms of breathing enthusiasm, resources, and know-how to extremist movements. This is especially problematic, given that Europe is already struggling to pose a credible alternative to these socio-political trends in many of its corners.

<https://bit.ly/3dJFIqu>

Russian Propaganda Efforts in the Baltics and the Wider Region

Lukas Andriukaitis

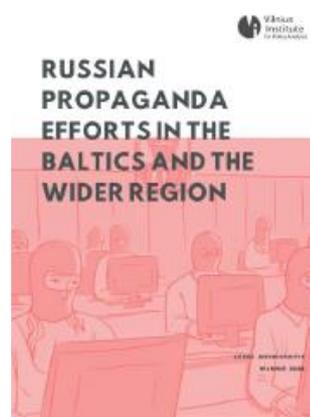
POLICY PAPERS

Foreign Fighters in Ukraine: Assessing Potential Risks

Eglė E. Murauskaitė

This study analyses the profiles of foreign fighters who have joined the conflict in Ukraine on either side and assesses the risks of radicalization as these fighters are increasingly returning home. With considerable attention given to potential terrorism risks posed by foreign fighters of the Islamic bent returning from Syria and Iraq, foreign fighters in Ukraine receive relatively little coverage - and when they do, this faulty analogy at play risks making the potential radicalizing factors worse.

The study systematizes extensive foreign fighter profile case studies and draws on several interviews with returning fighters from the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, and Scandinavia. Far from uncovering a budding network of violent extremists, it suggests that the conflict in Ukraine is becoming the grounds for many strongly right-wing and left-wing bent men to settle the scores of historic injustices. This cluster of fighters disappointed in the global system, Western



Since early 2010s, Russia stepped into a whole new level of propaganda game. Varying in forms and shapes, Russia's propaganda continues to be displayed in

advancement of all the ongoing conflicts as well as targeting closest Eastern European countries or NATO allies.

Despite that it is prospering and has advanced considerably through the past years, yet still has its noticeable tendencies. Five clear strategies that Russia seems to be following while building up its approach to propaganda, such as spread of propaganda on as many various channels as possible or making the disinformation opportunistic, have been distinguished in the paper.

Based on different real examples taken from the Russian campaign, this paper is structured for the best possible exposure of different techniques used in clash between artificial facts presented by the Russian and the real facts. In accordance with the main tactics implemented by Russia, five reasoned

recommendations to counterstrike fake reality, development of national narratives and strong national institution for strategic communication being great examples, are presented as well. In spite of inability to completely avoid or stop the spread of developing Kremlin propaganda, numerous measures might be taken to diminish the impact of propaganda and to avoid dramatic consequences.

<https://bit.ly/3rUGGoQ>

The Union State of Belarus and Russia: Myths and Realities of Political-Military Integration

Anaïs Marin

The policy paper analyses the circumstances that make regional security volatile. It discusses whether Belarus' sovereignty is endangered by Russia's assertive attempts to achieve "deeper integration", what are the future prospects of the union state of Belarus and Russia, as well as weaknesses of NATO and its members in the North Eastern region.

The paper also analyses the widely spread myths regarding the integration process and provides policy recommendations for the neighbouring countries.

<https://bit.ly/2RiewHP>

The Impact of Global Actors on 2020 Political Crisis in Belarus

Siarhei Kharytonau

This policy paper aims to give an overview of the first 100 days of protests, the impact of protests on Belarusian society and the state, provides policy options and scenarios based on position of the political crisis in Belarus as of late November 2020. It tackles the question of influence of global actors (Russia, the EU, NATO, the US) and their role in resolving the political dimension of current crisis in Belarus (although the crisis

has become multidimensional and will require a more complex resolution if it will remain). Finally, this paper provides policy recommendations for Lithuania, the EU / NATO member states, and NATO alliance as a whole on how to address the challenges of Belarus crisis considering local context and numerous peculiarities of its internal politics and senses.

<https://bit.ly/3fSZOkU>

New Rules, Old Problems: the US, NATO, Europe, and the Challenges of Global Leadership

Edward Lucas

Even before he takes office, president elect Joe Biden is rewriting the rules. This administration wants allies. It aims to lead, but not alone. The era of geopolitical competition is not over. But the era of "America First" is. This paper examines what this change means for the United States, for its European allies, and for the multilateral organisations to which they belong.

<https://bit.ly/3uwAjd5>

Journalistic Exemption under the European Data Protection Law

Natalija Bitiukova

The primary aim of the "journalistic exemption" under the European data protection law is to address the tension between freedom of speech and a right to data protection and to codify the general need to balance these two fundamental rights. The "journalistic exemption" is embedded in Article 85 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and mostly follows the wording of the Article 9 of the Data Protection Directive (a predecessor of the GDPR). It essentially creates a possibility for the Member States to exempt those who

exercise their freedom of speech for “journalistic purposes” from specific GDPR rules and obligations, meaning that they would not need to comply with these rules.

However, the boundaries of the exemption are not clearly outlined in the GDPR and are left to be defined by the Member States. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to understand the approaches taken by the Member States to implement Article 85 in the national legal frameworks; critically assess these approaches against the freedom of expression and data protection standards developed on the European level; and analyze their practical implications for journalists, media undertakings and anyone who exercises freedom of expression for journalistic purposes.

The paper puts forward six recommendations, ranging from the legislative and regulatory to self-regulatory interventions. These recommendations are addressed to the EU Member States, supervisory authorities, and the interest groups, such as journalist and media associations, think tanks, and public interest groups.

<https://bit.ly/3uxkaUH>

How Disinformation Narratives Are Spread Using Comments Sections of the Most Popular Lithuanian Online Daily

Karolis Jonutis

Different visions of society, interpretations of separate events or processes meet in all information channels that we use daily and that encourage society to interpret social and political world in one way or the other. One of the visions is the discourse of Lithuania as a “failed state”.

The chosen space for news comments (namely, delfi.lt) is primarily interesting because different interpretations of various events clash here directly, even though

usually anonymously. In this way the study tries to demonstrate how, based on one pattern, different problems (e. g., historical memory, social problems or Lithuanian military policy issues) merge into common discourse of Lithuania as a “failed state”.

<https://bit.ly/3cXdBEW>

Analytical Study of Financial Relationships between Lithuanian State Institutions and Media

Viktoras Bachmetjevas



The fact that the media must not be dependent on political powers is self-evident in democratic society. On the other hand, there is a consensus that in the times of internet media, especially in a

small country, media outlets find it hard to survive without financial support from the state. This is the reason why it is so important to have clear and transparent policy of spending state budget funds for the media. Unfortunately, at this moment the government does not even know how much of the state budget funding reach public media sector. The aim of the study is to fill this gap.

<https://bit.ly/3s1LVTR>

Relations between Migration and Satisfaction with Lithuanian Government and Public Services

Ilona Strumickienė

The policy paper is based on the survey of Lithuanian emigrants carried out in January and February of 2018 by public opinion research company “Vilmorus”. In order to

prepare the study 1500 respondents were questioned; they were all no younger than 18 and lived abroad for no less than 6 months in the three regions of Europe – Scandinavia, UK and Ireland, and Southern Europe. The paper aims at analyzing the views of Lithuanian emigrants towards Lithuanian government and public services as well as the factors making impact on those views.

Besides, the study also revealed that the migrants have especially bad attitude towards Lithuanian systems of legal and social services, which encouraged them to emigrate. Nevertheless, only a small part of the emigrants is willing to contribute to the positive changes in Lithuania.

<https://bit.ly/3rZMZHG>

VILNIUS CONSULTATIONS 2020

Annual VIPA event – *Vilnius Consultations 2020*: “Is It the End of the World as We Know It? Security and Resilience in Post-Pandemic Recovery”

Vilnius Consultations 2020 consisted of 3 discussion sessions on Zoom.

September 11: Changing Nature of the U.S. Global Leadership: Implications for Resilience in the NATO’s Eastern Flank

Transatlantic alliance has been the main pillar of US foreign policy, and US leadership has been greatly appreciated in the NATO’s Eastern Flank. Sudden withdrawal of US from Syria leaving Kurdish forces vulnerable was unintentional but quite a painful reminder for the Baltic States of their own situation in 1945 and might have left some questions unanswered for non-NATO allies. Trump-Biden scandal on Ukraine exposed how internal issues of the US might plague important foreign policy issues. Recent troop withdrawal from Germany (though resettling some of them across

Europe) also raise questions.

Global approval of US leadership in the world has declined dramatically since the election of Donald Trump. What kind of challenges these trends present to NATO’s Eastern flank and European Union? Is the role of US leadership in European resilience to external threats is changing and if it is, how? Panel participants: Edward Lucas, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at CEPA; Martin Svárovsky, Head of Security Strategies Program at European Values Center for Security Policy; Žaneta Ozoliņa, Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia. Discussion was moderated by Emilija Pundziute Gallois, Fellow at CERl, Sciences Po.

<https://bit.ly/3dHLedb>

September 17: Emergent Hybrid Strategies in Pandemic Era

Corona virus lockdown, loss of jobs and overheating of healthcare systems in some countries has exposed new vulnerabilities in the sphere of societal security in Europe. The rapid spread of global conspiracies about secret forces behind the pandemic, so called info-demic, influence operations masking as assistance from external actors – have been characteristic of this new situation. With situation in Belarus heating, and emerging evidence of Kremlin’s hybrid interference, this panel will discuss the strategies of reaction and deterrence of newly emerging hybrid threats.

Panel participants: Marius Laurinavičius, Senior Expert and the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis; Eric Povel, Program Officer at NATO PPD; Susanne Spahn, independent researcher; Marcus Kolga, Senior Fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. Discussion was moderated by Donatas Puslys, Head of Media and Democracy Programme at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis.

<https://bit.ly/3rXlZsl>

September 22: Updating the Meaning of Grit: How Much of Civil Unrest Is Enough to Overthrow the Regime?

Protests of unprecedented scope and mass industry strikes are taking place in Belarus, a country which since 1994 was ruled by Alexander Lukashenko. Never before post-election repressions in Belarus have produced even more stamina and patience, and never before protesting Belarusians have received international support of this scope.

Peaceful protests of women with flowers and singing lullabies hacked the logic of power structures, organising solely through social media and decentralisation of protests have left external and internal actors in awe. With leadership of the protests unclear and with no prior free parliamentary structures it is still unclear how civil unrest can transform into political structure.

Panel participants: Viktorija Rusinaitė, Head of European Security Programme at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis; Artyom Shraibman, Belarusian Political Analyst; Anaïs Marin, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus. Discussion was moderated by Vadim Vileita, journalist, interpreter, and political commentator.

<https://bit.ly/3rXISNr>

ANALYTICAL – EDUCATIONAL PROJECT “20 YEARS OF PUTIN’S RULE”

V. Putin has already been in power for 20 years. Nevertheless, there are still many things about the nature of his regime or the actual ways and methods of operation that are not yet known, at least to the wider audience. This is the reason why VIPA’s senior expert Marius Laurinavičius, along

with the news portal LRT. It has started analytical and educational project aiming at disclosing the less known facts about V. Putin’s regime.

This project is a series of analytical articles that reveal information unknown to society or Russia related topics that had not been analysed before.

<https://bit.ly/3wGAjt4>

CONTRIBUTION TO KREMLIN WATCH

Kremlin Watch is a strategic programme of the European Values Centre for Security Policy which aims to expose and confront instruments of Russian influence and disinformation operations focused against Western democracies. VIPA’s expert Ernestas Taranas contributes towards a programme-related newsletter on a bi-weekly basis. VIPA’s contributions feature latest news and stories primarily focused on Russian propaganda and its activities in the Baltic media sphere.

<https://bit.ly/3fYIHy9>

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY NETWORK (MIRT)

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis initiated and has been leading the non-formal national network of Media and Information Literacy (MIRT) that brings together various institutional and NGO initiatives dedicated to advancing media and information literacy in Lithuania. It brings together strategic communication related departments at the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior, as well as

various non-governmental organisations. The purpose of the network is to coordinate, share information and opportunities for activities and cooperation in this field of exceptional importance to every democracy of the world.

More than 20 organisations and institutions have joined the network so far. The network is open to new members – organisations engaged in or intending to engage in activities and projects related to the topic. Coordinator of the network – VIPA’s expert at Good Governance Programme Algis Davidavičius.

<https://bit.ly/3d1UMRf>

PROJECT “UNIVERSITY OF ELVES”

This project aimed at integrating different attempts to fight disinformation under one conceptual framework which would give better understanding on how and why particular disinformation narratives are created and spread to different audiences. This comprehensive approach could lead to a better understanding of Kremlin’s disinformation campaigns, its aims as well as tactics, and assist in building measures not only for a continuous fight against particular pieces of disinformation but also for a comprehensive strategy on how to strengthen civic resilience against disinformation.

The purpose of this project is to analyze how different narratives are created around various sensitive problems and how such purposeful targeting affects vulnerable audiences, such as ethnic minorities, people in the risk of poverty, emigrants, and inhabitants of less developed Lithuanian regions in order to destroy their interpersonal and institutional trust. We aimed to look not only at how these narratives are constructed and adapted but also at the way they are spread using different channels, such as Kremlin-friendly media, social networks, article comments in the mainstream media,

and other means, namely “trolls”, automated accounts (bots), fake journalists, etc. This comprehensive approach resulted in policy paper detailing Kremlin’s disinformation activities.

The policy paper is accompanied by methodological material providing an Anti-disinfo Toolbox for educators to analyze the topic of disinformation with different target groups: national minorities, senior citizens, people in less developed regions of Lithuania. Besides, an educational campaign involving a set of animated explainers, detailing the work of Russian disinformation, was organized. This was organized under our continuous popular project #PackOfLies.

Project leader – VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys. The project was financed by Information Access Fund (USA).

#PackOfLies



#PackOfLies is a brand product of Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis. The goals of #PackOfLies are not only to detect and debunk malicious disinformation but also equip our readers with tools

which would increase their resilience, media and information literacy. When creating #PackOfLies special attention is paid to disinformation related to historical narratives and employment of social networks for disinformation spreading purposes.

<https://bit.ly/3u5jFBu>

MODERN ART AS REVOLUTION



“Modern Art as Revolution“ was a project carried out by Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis in partnership with MO museum comprising series of discussions dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Lithuanian independence. Two artists participated in each discussion. They both represent the same field but two completely different generations. A lecture by an expert of the field served as an introduction which was followed by the conversation and discussion between the two artists. Moderator of discussions – VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys. In total six discussions covering different art fields were organized: literature (participants: Jūratė Čerškutė, Aidas Marčėnas, Giedrė Kazlauskaitė), theatre (participants: Rasa Vasinauskaitė, Irena Veisaitė, Gintaras Varnas), music (participants: Domanatas Razauskas, Algirdas Kaušpėdas, Dovydas Bluvšteinas), art (participants: Skaidra Trilupaitytė, Arvydas Šaltenis, Eglė Grėbliauskaitė), photography (participants: Margarita Matulytė, Antanas Sutkus, Artūras Morozovas), and architecture (participants: Gintautas Mažeikis, Julija Reklaitė, Laima Kreivytė, Tomas Grunskis). The artwork “Happy End” by Jonas Jurcikas (1986 – 2020) was used for the poster of the discussion series.

<https://bit.ly/39SQN7j>

LRT: HOMO CULTUS. MAŽOSIOS EUROPOS POKALBIAI



Photo: Gabrielė Girčiūtė

Radio show “Homo Cultus. Mažosios Europos pokalbiai” is weekly broadcasted on national broadcaster’s channel *LRT Klasika* and is hosted by the Head of Media and Democracy program Donatas Puslys; he analyses various topics about European identity, democracy, and free societies with various experts from different fields.

E.g.,

<https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000122388/homo-cultus-mazosios-europos-pokalbiai-filosofo-kristina-tamelyte-apie-politiniu-ideologiju-istakas-ir-ju-svarba-siandien>

ASSISTANCE FOR TEACHERS: INTEGRATED LESSON PLANS FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 9-12

The idea of creating lesson plans arose from noticing how many books analyzing challenges to democracy are being published. The plans were composed in a certain way to make the process of education more relevant and include the most important questions of the state of democracy, also aiming at

helping to choose the most valuable information from the whole abundance, as well as wishing to present the main thoughts of certain authors, trying to combine academic studies with fiction, especially dystopias that analyze challenges similar to those of our democracies. This integration of academic activities and fiction allows to use these lesson plans in the classes of different subjects – history, literature, ethics or civic education. Lesson plans were prepared by VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys.

<https://bit.ly/3fRcokm>

“DEMOCRACY AT THE CROSSROAD“

This series of articles based on scientific research and Western literature analyze challenges to liberal democracy – polarisation of society, disinformation, populism, disintegration of social tissue of the society, transformation of the media and so on.

These articles aim not only at attracting attention to the most relevant problems of democracy, but also at discussing the possible solutions of those problems. These articles by VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys were published by the news portal LRT.lt

<https://bit.ly/2PLUiFN>

PROJECT “ELVES’ ACADEMY“

Students were introduced to digital research methods during the interactive lessons. These methods can be used to explore freely available information on the Internet and to identify lies and disinformation. Students learned how to use digital technologies available to everyone to unmask disinformation, as well as learned who

creates this false information and why, learned to recognize it, and protect their community from further dissemination of disinformation. During the training students learned to distinguish between facts and manipulations, reinforcing their critical thinking. The open-source methods used in this training are simple and learning to use them takes just a few hours. After this training, participants not only had a better understanding of how disinformation works, but also gained the knowledge on how to check and verify the information they are interested in online. A significant part of disinformation spread in Lithuania is about Lithuanian army and NATO forces in the Baltics. Understanding disinformation, its aims and methods is crucial when trying to resist the provocations. The trainings were led by VIPA’s Head of European Security Programme Viktorija Rusinaitė, VIPA’s Senior analyst Indrė Vareikytė, and VIPA’s Associate analyst and Associate director of Atlantic Council’s DFRLab Lukas Andriukaitis.

PROJECT “YOUTH OPINION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EU PUBLIC DIPLOMACY“

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis along with partners from 6 other countries participates in the international project “Youth Opinion and Opportunities for EU Public Diplomacy: Youth Narratives and Perceptions of the EU and EU-Ukraine Relations in Ukraine and the three Baltic States“ (E-YOUTH). VIPA analyzed the research data of 2019-2020: media narratives about the EU, Ukraine, and the Baltic States; data of the qualitative research (Q-sort method) of the youth target groups (graduating school students 18 years and

older as well as university students) in order to analyze perception of narratives provided by the media; interviews of youth opinion leaders. Research results will be presented together with the international team in May 2021.

PROJECT “OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS IN MUNICIPALITIES”

VIPA started implementing the project “Oversight of Governing Institutions in Municipalities” financed by Active Citizens Fund in 2020. The problem addressed by the project is that decision-makers in the regions do not reliably use data and confirmed evidence to analyze the problems that exist on municipal level. Hence regional policy decisions are rarely evidence-based. Also, active citizens and their organizations or communities lack skills and tools and access to influence policy decisions through evidence-based arguments.

This project will help local communities and individual interested citizens to represent the interests by proactively using openly available data to identify key issues in their respective regions. The project will strengthen the capacity of local organizations to identify problems in municipalities, strengthen government oversight in specific areas, and develop recommendations for appropriate solutions, advocacy plans and communication strategies. The project will also help local organizations and communities to acquire the necessary skills and experience and strengthen the role of local citizens' organizations in the regions.

RESEARCH ON PERCEPTIONS OF NEPOTISM

VIPA’s long term goal to contribute to the civic countering of state capture by democratically unaccountable interest groups was brought a step closer to fruition back in 2018 by conducting literature, expert and public opinion research on problems of nepotism in Lithuania – what are the levels and nature of acceptance of this controversial mode of social networking, what is the scope of this difficult challenge for our fledgling democracy. VIPA continues to analyze perceptions of nepotism expanding it in order to include potential risk groups of nepotism in the public sector. A public opinion survey was carried out in November marking out different national minorities which allows to analyze the dimension of perception of nepotism that was not analyzed before.

<https://bit.ly/3t0tFeP>

ELECTION MONITORING

In the series of articles in three parts “Media Monitoring during Parliament Election” VIPA’s analyst Ernestas Taranas overviewed disinformation related to the election process. The aim of the articles was to introduce wider society to fake news spread on the internet in order to weaken democratic processes in Lithuania. Specific examples were employed for the analysis and deconstruction of disinformation narratives thus allowing the reader to have a clearer vision about the activities of Kremlin-friendly websites and their aims.

<https://bit.ly/3d0PJAp>

<https://bit.ly/2RknLar>

<https://bit.ly/3t2q007>

ANATOMY OF POLITICS

In the article series “Anatomy of Politics”, VIPA’s associate analyst Matas Baltrukevičius dedicated most attention to the Parliament election of 2020. The articles gave an overview of the state of all political powers, as well as the factors that could have influenced the election results. After the election, possible causes of the outcome and further political implications were analyzed. Separate attention was given to the analysis of newly proposed ideas that could have significant influence on political system.

<https://bit.ly/2Q700m7>

CORONAVIRUS ATLAS

There will never be too much information when facing the global crisis. Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis presented the project aiming at introducing society to the simple facts and numbers related to the experience of other countries in fighting coronavirus. VIPA does not provide an opinion about the measures taken but rather provide the information about other countries and their experience. Some measures taken in other countries cannot even be applied in Lithuania due to legal or other reasons.

<https://2QK7zif>

VIPA EVENTS

January 30: Journalistic Exemption under the European Data Protection Law

Presentation of the policy paper “Journalistic Exemption under the European Data Protection Law” by data protection lawyer Natalija Bitiukova. Conclusions were presented and the following questions were discussed: what the definition of “journalistic

exemption” is; who can rely on the exemption, or, in other words, what is its personal scope; what activities are exempted or what is the material scope; which rules do not apply as a result of the exemption or the nature of the derogations. Policy paper was presented by the author Natalija Bitiukova, the event was moderated by VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys.

<https://bit.ly/2QK7zif>

February 7: Studies 2020. Discussion on Contemporary Communication

The discussion was organized in partnership with Faculty of Creative Industries at Vilnius Tech and “The Atomic Garden Vilnius”, and it focused on the questions about contemporary communication: what do universities teach and what does the present-day media user need; are we prepared to critically evaluate news appearing in different media; what risks related to media literacy dominate and what are the “fake news”.

Participants of the discussion were Dean of the Faculty of Creative Industries at Vilnius Tech Prof. Dr. Živilė Sederevičiūtė–Pačiauskienė, Head of the School of Creativity and Advertising “The Atomic Garden Vilnius” Aivaras Šičkus, journalist Karolis Vyšniauskas; moderator – VIPA’s Head of Media and Democracy Programme Donatas Puslys.

February 12: Migration and Satisfaction with the Lithuanian Government

The policy paper “Relations between Migration and Satisfaction with the Lithuanian Government and Public Services” was presented in the event. The policy paper is based on the survey of Lithuanian

emigrants carried out in January and February of 2018 by public opinion research company “Vilmorus”. In order to prepare the study 1500 respondents were questioned; they were all no younger than 18 and lived abroad for no less than 6 months in the three regions of Europe – Scandinavia, UK and Ireland, and Southern Europe. The paper aims at analyzing the views of Lithuanian emigrants towards Lithuanian government and public services as well as the factors making impact on those views. Besides, the study also revealed that the migrants have especially bad attitude towards Lithuanian systems of legal and social services, which encouraged them to emigrate. Nevertheless, only a small part of the emigrants is willing to contribute to the positive changes in Lithuania. The policy paper was presented by the Head of Adolfas Damušis Democratic Studies Centre at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, the event was moderated by VIPA’s Good Governance Programme’s expert Algirdas Davidavičius.

<https://bit.ly/3eiJlhV>

February 13: Disinformation Narratives in Comments of Lithuanian Online Daily

Dr. Karolis Jonutis presented his policy paper “How Disinformation Narratives Are Spread Using Comments Sections of the Most Popular Lithuanian Online Daily”. Different visions of society, interpretations of separate events or processes meet in all information channels that we use daily and that encourage society to interpret social and political world in one way or the other. One of the visions is the discourse of Lithuania as a “failed state”. The chosen space for news comments (namely, delfi.lt) is primarily interesting because different interpretations of various events clash here directly, even though usually anonymously. In this way the study tries to demonstrate how, based on one pattern, different problems (e. g., historical

memory, social problems or Lithuanian military policy issues) merge into common discourse of Lithuania as a “failed state”.

<https://bit.ly/3x8s1dv>

May 21: Strategies of Kremlin’s Propaganda in the Baltics, Ukraine, and Belarus

What strategies do Kremlin’s propagandists employ when spreading disinformation in the Baltics, Ukraine, and Belarus? How did COVID-19 pandemics influence the poisonous cocktail of Kremlin’s propaganda? These and other questions were discussed at the international event dedicated to the presentation of the policy paper “Russian Propaganda Efforts in the Baltics and the Wider Region”. Author of the policy paper Lukas Andriukaitis is the associate analyst at VIPA and associate director at Atlantic Council’s DFRLab in Brussels. Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltics are among the major targets of Kremlin’s propaganda. Kremlin’s propagandists have been trying for years to prove that Ukraine is a failed state politically as well as economically. Belarus is the only country in the region that did not apply quarantine during the pandemics of coronavirus. Strongly criticized for this by the Western media, Belarus is the target of Kremlin’s disinformation. Kremlin is trying to gain more influence not by employing only subsidies, the format of union state, but also the media. In the Baltics, the main concerns of Kremlin’s propaganda are NATO and economy.

Participants of the event were the author of the policy paper Lukas Andriukaitis, the Head of the Hybrid Warfare Analysis Group at the Ukrainian Crisis Media Centre Liubov Tsybulska, Head of Research in the “EAST” Centre Andrei Yelisseyeu, VIPA’s Head of European Security Programme Viktorija Rusinaitė.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r01VReDjDqY>

June 23: The Union State of Belarus and Russia: Myths and Realities

What are the future prospects of the Union State of Belarus and Russia? Is Belarus' sovereignty endangered by Russia's assertive attempts to achieve "deeper integration"? To what extent the military and political integration between Russia and Belarus is intensifying and to what extent does this pose a threat to Poland and Lithuania? Expert panel discussion was organized on the occasion of issuing a policy paper by Anaïs Marin "The Union State of Belarus and Russia: Myths and Realities of Political-Military Integration". Participants: Anaïs Marin, Associate Fellow at Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House; Kamil Kłysiński, Senior Fellow at Department for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, OSW; Marius Laurinavičius, Senior Analyst at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis; Dzianis Melyantsou, Coordinator of Belarus's Foreign Policy Programme at Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations; moderated by Viktorija Rusinaite, Head of European Security Programme at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis.

<https://bit.ly/3tMatBR>

November 5: Presentation of the Policy Paper on Financial Relationships between Lithuanian State Institutions and Media

The fact that the media must not be dependent on political powers is self-evident in democratic society. On the other hand, there is a consensus that in the times of internet media, especially in a small country, media outlets find it hard to survive without financial support from the state. This is the

reason why it is so important to have clear and transparent policy of spending state budget funds for the media. Unfortunately, at this moment the government does not even know how much of the state budget funding reach public media sector. The aim of the study was to fill this gap. Media sponsorship policy, attitude towards purchasing media service, editorial independence and other issues were discussed at the presentation of this policy paper. The policy paper was presented by the author philosopher Viktoras Bachmetjevas.

The presentation was followed by discussion between Director of National Broadcaster LRT Monika Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė, Chairman of Lithuanian Journalists Union Dainius Radzevičius, and expert Marius Kalanta.

<https://bit.ly/3eoObQb>

December 10: Belarus: Future Scenarios

The crisis in Belarus started as a politically driven social movement for a change. After the state security, police, and the army used brutal violence and torture against random civilians and peaceful protesters, purely political crisis has turned into a multidimensional conflict which now poses humanitarian, economic, military, and nuclear security risks. Meanwhile, the regime of Alexander Lukashenka has taken no steps to meet any of the demands of its opponents. On the contrary - repressions gain momentum in response to growing civil solidarity and determination to tear down the "lukashism" as a system of governance. What future scenarios Belarus may be facing in the upcoming months? What are the main subjects related to the crisis that may take proactive steps to resolve it? These questions were discussed by Siarhei Kharytonau, author of the policy paper "The impact of

global actors (EU, NATO, UN, US, Russia) on 2020 political crisis in Belarus” and Alexander Dabravolski, Senior political advisor to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, member of the Coordination Council for the Transfer of Power in Belarus. The event was moderated by Jovita Neliupšienė, Chancellor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

<https://bit.ly/3dApjFX>

December 18: U.S. – Lithuanian Relations at the Start of New J. Biden’s Administration Office

Part I. The present state of Lithuania – U.S. relations – a springboard for a new jump? Participants of the discussion were Chief Adviser to the President of the Republic of Lithuania at the Foreign Affairs Group Asta Skaisgirytė, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius, Director of Defence Policy Group at the Ministry of National Defence Vaidotas Urbelis, Professor at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University Tomas Janeliūnas.

Part II. USA, Lithuania, and authoritarian regimes. Do U.S. and Lithuania’s agendas concur and how could they be used? The focus of discussion – possible changes or continuity in U.S. relations with China, Russia, Belarus and authoritarian regimes in general and Lithuania’s interests in this context. Participants of the discussion were Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs at the Lithuanian Parliament Žygimantas Pavilionis, Researcher at the Lithuanian Military Academy Liudas Zdanavičius, Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University Konstantinas Andrijauskas.

Part III. USA and European Union – challenges and opportunities. The focus of

discussion – possible scenarios of the development of the relations between USA and European Union as well as new opportunities and challenges for Lithuania in this context. Participants of the discussion were Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis, Director of Eastern Europe Studies Centre Linas Kojala, Chairman of Board at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis Prof. Šarūnas Liekis.

Part IV. USA, NATO and military dimension of security. How to avoid Europe’s “strategic autonomy” and USA’s further drawing back from Europe? How to further strengthen military presence of the USA in our region? The focus of discussion – possible scenarios in the area of military security and their opportunities and challenges to Lithuania. Participants of the discussion were Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence at the Lithuanian Parliament Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University Margarita Šešelgytė, and independent expert of international relations and security Dr. Nortautas Statkus.

<https://bit.ly/2Pboyda>

VIPA IN THE MEDIA

62 articles

65 radio interviews

45 interviews in the press

63 interviews and comments on television



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